

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ELDERLY IN LIGHT OF JEWISH LITERATURE

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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This professional project, completed by

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Because of tradition everyone knows who he is and what he is expected to do.

Tevye, from Fiddler on the Roof

Each of us needs to remember that it is as important to the dignity of the young to converse with the old, as well as for the well being of the old. We deprive ourselves by shunning the elderly.

Abraham J. Heschel

It is easy to love children. Even tyrants and dictators make a point of being fond of children. But the affection and care for the old, the incurable, the helpless are the true gold mines of a culture.

Abraham J. Heschel

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ABSTRACT

This project begins with the assumption that most Jews and Christians believe that the elderly in Biblical days were well taken care of by their children because of a mandate from God. If this be so, what has happened in modern times that the aged are ignored and lonely? Jewish literature is searched first to evaluate the assumption and then to gain an insight for better care for our elderly. The Covenant, wisdom theology, rabbinical teachings, and the Talmud are surveyed.

Idealism aside, suffering of the elderly is described in Scripture and continues among the Jewish elderly today. Can a home for the elderly assuage the suffering, as opposed to home care? Old values are being questioned and problems are presenting themselves that need urgent attention. A history of homes for the Jewish elderly in Europe and in America is given. Abraham J. Heschel attempts to outline a method of treatment for the elderly that will bring them happiness in their old age. He believes that learning to cope with old age should start at an early age.

A study of three homes for the aged is presented: a Jewish home, a Christian home, and a non-sectarian home, with an eye as to how Jewish literature has played a part in their formation and in their administration. Ten of the residents from each home are interviewed and the results are carefully tabulated in chart form so that conclusions may be drawn. While the project was intended to be scientific, for many reasons along the way it lost its objectiveness and is subjective

instead. One feels that the project raises many questions that can be the basis for further study.

INTRODUCTION

The problem addressed by the project is how do we sustain respect for the elderly in our present American culture. How can the elderly respect themselves after their ability to contribute to society has stopped? How did the Jews in ancient times treat the elderly? Are the Jews today careful to obey the imperatives laid down by God in the covenant? In a comparison between the Jews and the Christians, which of the two are caring for the elderly so that self-respect and general health are being maintained?

The problem of the aged is important because it appears that the elderly are being treated in a demeaning way. What does one do with a senile parent when both husband and wife are working? What does one do when the youngsters in the home annoy the elderly? What can be done in an age of fast foods and fast-paced lives when the elderly need a special diet, attention, and love?

In this paper we will go back to Jewish literature and notice how Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the kings and the prophets, and priests addressed the problem of the elderly. Did God issue imperatives on the subject and if he did, are we following God's directions for care for the elderly today? In this paper we will study three homes for the elderly and the people in them--a Jewish home for the elderly, a Protestant Christian home, and a non-sectarian home. We will be observing to see if God's imperatives of "honor your father and mother" are being followed and how this imperative is being carried out.

In a more practical way, the project will assess the

effectiveness of care for the elderly in the Los Angeles area. This will be done by research and, in addition, ten residents will be interviewed in the three homes: Shalom, California Christian Home, and San Gabriel Convalescent Hospital. At face value the question is, if the elderly were treated so well in Jewish literature times, then what has happened between then and now; why do we not simply return to that mode of treating the elderly? It is to answer this question that this paper is all about.

In Chapter One, we go back to Jewish literature for our base. For those of us raised in the Jewish or Christian faith, we either know or vaguely think we know that the elderly in Jewish literature were treated with respect and admiration and that they were well provided for in old age. It is true that covenant theology demanded that they be honored and respected; however, in wisdom theology it is pointed out that the elderly must love God and serve him in order to gain the admiration and respect of relatives and of the community. The elderly must serve God and the community. Debates were later held by rabbis in an effort to determine if the elderly were to be respected regardless or if they must earn respect and a home in their latter years.

Chapter Two begins to see the care of the elderly in a more practical light. It is no longer an academic question (as in Chapter One). Rabbi Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson explains that the elderly often had a rough time if, for some reason, the family was deceased. The elderly of that particular family then had to earn his living by begging in the market place. Thus, although old age was originally invested with strength and majesty, people in the lower strata of society who had

lost the support and care provided by the family underwent much suffering, if not humiliation, in their old age. This transition needed much help, and it is out of this need that help for the elderly was begun in its many forms.

In this chapter we see just how horrible it is to grow old, through the eyes of the "Preacher" in Ecclesiastes. Next, we span the centuries and view a Jewish son registering his father in a home for the aged; we feel with him all the sorrow and guilt that both he and his wife feel. This is followed by a section on the history of Jewish homes since biblical days, in Europe and throughout the world where Jews have been forced to flee. This section ends with help that is available for the elderly Jew in the Los Angeles area.

Chapter Two ends with wonderful insight from Rabbi Abraham Heschel on the subject of Godly care for the elderly. He hopes the elderly will seek a close relationship with God and that the warmth of that relationship will help the elderly to give of themselves to others. He asks the elderly to share themselves with others and not to sit in loneliness. He concludes that old age can be a time of celebration.

The third chapter begins with up-to-date statistics on the elderly and on homes for the elderly. A survey shows what the American public believes about homes for the elderly, and the result is that the public needs to be educated as to the value of homes to the senior segment of the population. Three homes are found to provide a study area of their environments and of the elderly in them. These homes include Shalom, a Jewish retirement home in the Beverly-Fairfax area of Los Angeles; the Disciple's Protestant Christian Home in Rosemead; and the

Community Convalescent Hospital in San Gabriel.

It was most gracious of these homes to allow me to observe, ask questions, and interview the residents. Many data were gathered on all the homes except Shalom since it is run and owned by a private family and they were understandably reluctant to discuss the business end of the home with me. Charts will be found at the end of each question that was asked of the residents so that comparisons of the three homes will be easier to be made. Contrasting and comparing of the three homes is done so that one can see how one home places an emphasis here and another there. All three are doing a great service within their own scope.

CHAPTER I

THE ELDERLY IN THE BIBLE AND JEWISH TRADITION

Long Life as a Sign of God's Blessing

It is reported in the Bible that Methusaleh lived to be 969 years old. Abraham, the father of the Israelite people, lived to be 175 years old. It was a goal of Jews to live long on this earth, rather than die and go to Sheol, that gloomy underworld of departed spirits. We are told that old age is eschatological,

going beyond the deuteronomic expectation of long life for such as keep the commandments (Deut. 30:19-20) biblical eschatology contemplates a return at the end time to the state of quasi immortality characteristic of the beginning Abraham lived to be 175. It even speaks of an end of dying (Isaiah 25:8. "He will swallow up death for ever").¹

Covenant theology may have gotten its stance from the warring tribes of the seventh century B.C., since one tribe would conquer another and the king would make a covenant or promise or deal with the conquered people. Here are the things that I will do for you; however, you must in return do these certain things for me. If you break the contract, then I will punish you in this fashion. There was not room for compromise; obey or else was the rule of the warring tribes. In the same manner, the God of Deuteronomy struck up a covenant with the people of Israel through Moses. God offers certain blessings for obeying him; and on the other hand, curses are promised if his commandments are disobeyed. Consider the

¹S. H. Blank, "Age, Old," The Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 55.

following texts in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 13:3, call for love from the Israelite out of his whole undivided heart, (i.e., mind) and soul (i.e., desire)--"with all your heart and with all your soul" is a favorite phrase in Deuteronomy (26:16; 30:2, 6, 10). Deuteronomy 6:5 adds "with all your might." This is to emphasize the devotion that is expected to Yahweh from the Israelite, that of total person and existence.²

In covenant theology as a reward to those who obey Him, long life is promised. Genesis 15:15 is an example of this: "As for yourself, you shall be buried in a good old age." God promises a reward of long life to those who honor their mother and father. The Bible is definitely pro-old-age in the sense that it shows, in no uncertain terms, that the elderly are to be listened to and respected. A parable-like example is shown in Deuteronomy 22:7 of respect for the aged or mature. A person is hiking along a road in a field and comes upon a nest of young birds with the mother bird on the nest. The writer of Deuteronomy tells the hiker to let the mother bird escape and take only the young birds. If you let the "mother" of life go unharmed, "you will live long."

This story means many things. First, it is an emphasis for conservation. However, the main thrust is that the mature or elderly are to be respected and protected. This is a part of the covenant or blessings of Deuteronomy--"that it might go well with you, and that you may live long." The leaders are the elderly because they are experienced. The mother bird could fly away, build another nest, and raise another family of birds within a few weeks. If the mother were destroyed by the hiker, the young birds left would die from a lack of parental care; if the

²Elizabeth Achlemeier, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 35.

mother bird were eaten, she too would be out of the picture. But the main point is that on-going life would be stopped.

Elderly persons are the spiritual and cultural leaders in the family and in the community; they maintain and pass on the spiritual and cultural heritage. God informed the covenant writers of the Bible that, in order to be blessed, the elderly must be respected and cared for. The mature and elderly were at the height of spiritual and cultural strength if they had lived a life of obedience to God.

God promised long life to those who gave "a full and just weight" (Deuteronomy 25:15). A rule is given by God and it is expected to be obeyed. Reasons for the rule were not given other than that you will have a long life. To us it is obvious that an unjust measure could lead to bloodshed and death. At the least, neighbor would be suspicious of neighbor, and there could be no brotherliness and common worshipping of God. Mistrust, lack of communication, and downright war would end in an early death. Take the Bible as it is, give a just and fair measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land.

Deuteronomy 6:2 warns: "Keep all God's statutes and his commandments, keep them all the days of your life: that your days may be prolonged." Here we notice that one does not obey only laws that favor the elderly, but all laws of God. No one can say that God weights his thoughts mainly so that the elderly will benefit, but that the whole community of Israel will benefit. So far, we have mentioned blessings that come from obeying God; curses are in store for those who do not obey. In Deuteronomy 27:16 one reads: "Cursed be he who dishonors his father or his mother, and all the people shall say, Amen." Another verse

(Deuteronomy 28:45) not only tells about curses that are immediate, but that the curses will continue to follow those who do not obey God from generation to generation. "All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you, till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded you. They shall be upon you as a sign and a wonder; and upon your descendants for ever." In covenant theology, God delivers Israel from Egypt and creates the possibility of life for them. The individual and the nation can only realize this possibility by loving God. Loving God in Deuteronomy means obeying God's commandments. Long life is a sign of God's blessing. The alternative is death.

Attitudes toward the Elderly

Disrespect: A Mark of Evil Times

The Bible mentions in several places, as does the Talmud, that when the elderly are not treated respectfully the country is in bad shape; it is in for trouble ahead. When the elderly are not treated courteously, evil times are coming. Deuteronomy 28:50 tells that a nation of strong countenance will come upon Israel, who shall not regard the person of the old. In Isaiah 3:5, problems are foretold: the youth will be insolent to the elders, and the base fellow to the honorable. Another verse in Isaiah speaks of disrespect toward the elderly. Isaiah 47:6 shows the Lord speaking to Babylon: "I gave (the people) into your hand, you showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy."³

³Isaiah 47:6b (RSV).

Lamentations 5:12 describes how in evil times princes are hung up by their hands and no respect is shown to the elders. These verses are quoted to show the great respect paid to the elders since it is mentioned so often and is linked with such great events. It is an abnormality for the elderly to be treated badly and to be shown little or no respect. In the same line of reasoning, the Talmud, in Sotah 49b, says that troubled times preceding the coming of the Messiah are described as "being a lack of respect by the young toward their elders."

Respect

Unconditional. In Leviticus, we read: "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord." This chapter tells how to live a life of holiness; it has in it a blending of cultic requirements and ethical obligations as expressed in the Ten Commandments.⁴

One wonders if the writer had in mind the verse preceding when he asked that the elder be honored. It is the verse that warns against turning to mediums and wizards. One does not need mediums or wizards; instead, turn to the elderly for information, insight, and help in general. It is to be noticed that one is not only to honor and to listen to the elderly, but in the same instant to be fearful of God, remembering that He is the Lord.

It is to be understood that the biblical and rabbinical literature contains a number of expressions like the following: "A hoary head

⁴Leviticus 19:32 (RSV).

is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life" (Proverbs 16:31). "Do not despise your mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22b). "The beauty of old men is their gray hair" (Proverbs 20:29). Another verse from the Bible shows how a younger man, Elihu, showed respect to one older than himself: "Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he" (Job 32:4). This is a good place to note that we have stepped from covenant theology to that of wisdom theology. Let us remember that the notion of covenant is fundamental to the closely-knit Semitic society. A covenant, we remember, is a compact or agreement whose most apparent aspect--its contractual character--is not the most profound. The most profound is the binding force of the covenant with psychic community. On the other hand, wisdom theology is different. As described by N. K. Gottwald, "The Israelite domestication of wisdom becomes most evident in the identification of wisdom with the will and purpose of God for man." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10); that is the touchstone for the sages of Israel. The most important part of the description is "the peak of the process is reached when Wisdom is equated with Law as the perfect embodiment of the divine will."⁵ The assumption is that to be wise is to be near God.

The Talmud contains many sayings that support the idea of wisdom theology found in the Bible. The following verses indicate the relationship between covenant and wisdom theology. "It is told that Rabbi Meir arose whenever he saw even an ignorant old man; for, said he, 'the fact that he has grown old must be due to some merit'" (Yer. Bik. iii.65c).⁶

⁵ Norman K. Gottwald, A Light to the Nations (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 466.

⁶ David Philipson, "Age, Old," in The Jewish Encyclopedia (New

"Rabbi Johanan always rose before an aged heathen, because, as he said, 'of the suffering the heathen must have endured in the course of his long life'" (Kid. 33a).⁷ The Talmud has great respect for wisdom and learning and yet it urges respect even for the old man who has lost his learning, meaning that he is no longer able to think clearly. The logic behind this reasoning is as follows:

For there were placed in the ark of the covenant not only the two perfect tablets of the law, but also the fragments of the tablets that Moses shattered when he saw the people dancing before the golden calf (Ber. 8b).⁸

According to this thought, since the broken, cracked, and shattered pieces of the tablet were worth saving, so is a broken and shattered older person worthy of respect. One is beginning to see, then, that no opportunity is lost in the Bible and rabbinic literature to reach respect for the elderly.

Conditional. Philipson believes that the reason that the elderly were respected in biblical times was

. . . chiefly in the circumstance that advanced years were supposed to bring experience and wisdom. The old man, having passed through the trials of life, was looked upon as a source of counsel, and as being filled with the spirit of discretion and knowledge.⁹

Job 12:12, which is known as "wisdom literature," backs up this reasoning, stating, "Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days." In Chapter 15 of Job, his friends are trying to persuade Job to

York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901), I, 231.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

agree with them. Eliphaz tells him, "Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, older than your father" (Job 15:10).

The point here is that old age is respected over the reasoning of someone younger. This verse shows the thought of the day and not what Job is actually teaching. It is really teaching that wisdom is to be respected in youth as well as in old age and that the elderly can be incorrect in their judgment. Job teaches that the young who are wise are to be respected just as much as the older people who are wise.

It was most difficult for the Jewish culture to give up the idea that wisdom dwelt only with the elderly. A story is told in the Talmud (Ber. 28a). It seems that Eleazar ben Azariah was elected president of the Sanhedrin at age eighteen; he was considered too young. But a wonderful thing happened: his beard turned white, so that he appeared to be an old man. This was a way of making the youth acceptable to assume such a high post--he appeared as an old man. Generally speaking, however, Jewish literature indicates that the experience of years is the best guide in solving problems.

Still another story is told that seems to verify the fact that old age is to be respected. The Bible records that King Rehoboam chose young men as his advisers and that he dismissed the elders (1 Kings 12:13-14). As a result, the taxes were too much for the people to bear and the division of the kingdom was the result. This story is saying, is it not, that had the elders been listened to, the break-up of the kingdom would not have occurred. According to Jewish wisdom literature, the elderly are certainly to be affirmed, as we have seen. However, it will not be shown that wisdom theology does not back the elderly, right

or wrong. The elderly are respected in wisdom theology only as they obey God and serve humanity.

So far, we have noticed that the children of Israel, through Moses, made a covenant with God; He would protect and guide them and they, in return, were to love and obey Him. The aged were to be loved and cared for because God said that they were to be loved and cared for. In the philosophy of wisdom theology, a shift occurred in that only the elderly who truly loved God and served Him were to be respected and admired. "Oldness is not a virtue" (Kin. 3:1), but "wisdom and knowledge of the Torah determine its value." In fact, "even the opinions of the old were not universally preferred to those of the young" (B.B. 102b). When Rabbi R. Abbahu claimed authority in a certain dispute due to his age, Rabbi Jeremiah answered, "Is the matter decided by age? It is decided by reason." Targum Onkelos also reflects this view when translating the phrase, "You shall rise before the aged, as Arise before those knowledgeable in Torah." In Sifra Kedoshim 7:12, the rabbi held that even a young scholar is called zaken (elder) and should be honored. No honor is due the ignorant or sinful, though old.¹⁰

Philipson also agrees that the Bible and Talmud do not totally agree that old age is a virtue in itself. He cites Job 32:6-9 as an example where Elihu tells the others that he is young and they are old; but Elihu concludes, in Job 32:8-9, ". . . It is the Spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. It is not the old that are wise, nor the aged that understand what is right." The

¹⁰ Moshe D. Herr, "Old Age and the Aged," in Encyclopaedia Judaica (New York: Macmillan, 1971), II, 345.

Psalmist in Psalm 119:100 says that it is more important to keep the precepts of the Lord than merely to be old. The Preacher declares that a poor but wise child is better than a foolish king (Eccl. 4:13). Continuing to address the subject of respect for the old on the condition that they deserve it, Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi advised, ". . . Look not upon the vessel, but what is in it, for there are new vessels full of old wine, and there are old vessels which do not contain even new wine" (Ab. 4:207).¹¹ Wisdom literature illustrates the fact that old age is not enough to gain respect; one must have lived a good life before God and man--one also of service to the community.

Summary

In summary, one realizes that long life is a mark of a right relationship with God. This fact should condition our attitudes toward the elderly. Disrespect toward the elderly is a sign that society is, generally speaking, inadequate in God's sight. Respect is earned, not merely by being old, but by growing old with wisdom that derives from a right relationship with God.

¹¹Philipson, p. 231.

CHAPTER II

CARE OF THE ELDERLY: A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

The Problem of Old Age in Jewish TraditionGrim Descriptions of Old Age

A description that is lauded by many as being priceless is found in Ecclesiastes 12:1-5a. It is an admonition to the young to remember their Creator while they are young and are still in good health and able to remember. They are to praise him before the dismal years of old age are upon them. They are urged to think of their Creator before they are tempted to say, "I don't enjoy life." In youth, every day seems like sunshine; but in old age, the rain clouds will never pass away, or so it seems to the aged. Youths are proud of strong muscles and they excell in sports of all kinds; but in old age they will find that their arms will tremble and their legs will grow weak. In old age, the youth's ability to chew will be limited because of lack of teeth. The youth who can see so far and so clearly will, in old age, see things only dimly. He will no longer be able to hear street noises and music that pleased him as a youth will no longer be able to be heard because of deaf ears. Once youths were so light on their feet; now, in old age, even walking is dangerous and going to high places is out of the question. Youths, so proud of beautiful hair, will find in old age that it has turned white--if there is any to turn white. Youths were filled with hopes and desires of all kinds; but now, in old age, those who were once young will hardly be able to drag themselves along and all hope and desire will

be gone.

Ecclesiastes is a part of wisdom literature; rabbinic literature also contains descriptions of old age that are similar to those found in Ecclesiastes. In the Talmud (Lam. R. 1:2), we read that old age is unattractive and that the old resemble apes. The elderly can no longer reason (Shab. 89b). Here, too, the elderly are described metaphorically as in Ecclesiastes:

. . . the rocks have grown tall, the near have become (too) distant, two legs have become three (a cane), and the peacemaker of the house has ceased to function as such. Youth is a crown of roses, old age is a crown of willow rods (to administer punishment). A man must pray that in his later years, his eyes may see, his mouth eat, his legs walk, for in old age all power fails.¹

As the above illustrates, wisdom literature looks at old age in a realistic manner. Let us look at modern Jewish attitudes concerning the elderly.

Modern Jewish Family Hazards

The Jewish family in America is caught up in the problem of divorce. The divorce rate is crucial to an examination of the aged in the family since the stability of the nuclear family will affect the relationships and support systems available to the elderly family members.

The Gelfand and Kutzik study was conducted in 1979 and indicates that divorce rates among Jews have increased considerably in the last two decades. At a recent conference on American Jewish family life, statistics were cited indicating that forty percent of Jewish marriages are now ending

¹David Philipson, "Age, Old," in The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901), I, 231; quote from Tanh., Mi-Kez. 10.

in divorce. This is troubling to persons dedicated to the maintenance of traditional Jewish ties.

Since the elderly are often forced out of the home because of divorce, the young who were often taught cultural and religious values by the elderly in the home are without that relationship. The elderly often taught a trade or skill to the younger persons in the home and now that is also lacking. "Still, the Jewish family has been portrayed as providing a higher degree of support than comparable Catholic or Protestant families, according to a study done by Wake and Sporkowski, 1972."²

Another hazard for the family in this century are occupational demands and concomitant frequent moves. This constant moving and leaving old friends is difficult for the elderly. Coupled with so much moving is the fact that families are now smaller.

The smaller isolated family has become the norm, and responsibility to one's spouse and children now takes clear priority over obligations to parents. Although children still do help aged parents, especially in the working classes, the major responsibility for the old people has shifted to the government and organizations.³

Abraham J. Heschel presented a paper on aging at the White House Conference in 1961. According to him, the outstanding hazard facing old people is that they are not prepared for old age. "Old age involves the problem of what to do with privacy."⁴ He explains that primitive

²Donald Gelfand and Alfred Kutzik (eds.), Ethnicity and Aging (New York: Springer, 1979), III, 211-12.

³Beth B. Hess, Growing Old in America (New Brunswick: Transactional Books, 1976), p. 45.

⁴Abraham J. Heschel, "To Grow in Wisdom," in The Insecurity of Freedom (New York: New Day Press, 1967), p. 73.

societies often left the old to die helplessly. Today, he says, the elderly are often left in an expensive luxury hotel, a kind of home for the elderly, to die. For the older Jew, the golf course can be a subtle hazard; games and hobbies take the place of synagogue, ritual, and prayer. "The man of our time is losing the power to celebrate. Instead of participating in spiritual celebration, he seeks to be amused or entertained. Upon reaching the summit of his years, man discovers that entertainment is no substitute for celebration."⁵

Heschel suggests that the elderly are spiritually ill, in a sense, in the following ways: (1) the sense of being useless to, and rejected by, family and societies; (2) the sense of inner emptiness and boredom; and (3) loneliness and the fear of time.⁶

Sanford Seltzer has discovered what one might call still another hazard for the family and old age; it is the fact that more elderly persons are expected than ever in our history.

Current estimates indicate that, by the year 2000, the percentage of men and women in the United States who are 65 years of age or older will increase some 40%, to over 31 million people. Within 50 years, one out of every five Americans will be 65 years of age or older. Men attaining the age of 65 by the year 2000 can expect to live to be 83, and women reaching 65 in the year 2000 can expect to live to the age of 86. Statistics on aging with regard to the Jews are even higher.⁷

⁵Ibid., pp. 74-75.

⁶Ibid., p. 75.

⁷Sanford Seltzer, So Teach Us to Number Our Days (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1979), p. 3.

The Home for the Elderly in Jewish Culture

A Story of Old Age: The
Home for the Elderly

A family informs an elderly person that she or he is going to have to live in a "home." The aged person had always dreamed of this day of horror! When they were children, they had listened to the sobs of the old; here and there in the synagogue they prayed, "Al Tashlichenu l'es ziknu" (do not cast me away in my old age).

In that moment of aching prescience they had known about abandonment, they who had not yet been abandoned, and now they were being cast away. The children of the elderly stood guilty, and quiet, nearby. Their children knew, too. No matter what names they gave the Home, or the Home gave itself, they knew it was a place for the castaway. In innumerable ways, they had played out the realization.⁸

Here is a fictitious description of a son who, in desperation, is bringing his father to a home for the elderly. It is written by two social workers who have had experience in the field for many years. They are trying to show the trap that the children find themselves in, as well as the problem for the parents. Blaze is a man who brings his father into a home. He leans over the desk to sign the necessary papers admitting his dad. He pauses and lifts his head and says to the secretary:

I'll tell you something, he could've still been living with us, if he weren't such an impossible person, before my wife was about to have a nervous breakdown.

My wife would say, "Was that good Pa? Did you enjoy your meal?" And he'd look at her like she's some detail on the lawn or something. "Certainly, a meal fit for royalty, food for the mind, body, and soul," and wipe his mouth and walk away.⁹

⁸Dorothy Rabinowitz and Yedida Nielsen, Home Life, a Story (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 28.

⁹Ibid., p. 33.

The son in the story goes on and tells the secretary of the home for the aged, that his wife Jill was going downhill rapidly. The doctor said she must have a rest from any and all stress and aggravation or he wouldn't be responsible. So that is why they were bringing the father here. Blaze, the son, left to join his father and be depreciated again. The author comments that Blazer (the older person) was a rare type that kept his independent nature without giving up. The following comments are at the heart of the book as to why the elderly come to homes, as far as the experience of the two social workers writing the book are concerned.

Most people, they state, come to homes for the elderly for three reasons. The first is out of fear, then out of hopelessness, and finally out of despair. The elderly are persuaded to stay in the home by their children, with the help of beautifully illustrated institutional brochures. The fear that the elderly are most frightened of is fear of falling at home and the fear that since the family is growing, they (the elderly) are in the way. The elderly believe that at the "home" they will find friends to dispel the loneliness as well as the children's discomfort. Where is this "home" apt to be found? The "home" is usually set in a lower-middle, working-class neighborhood where real estate is cheaper than elsewhere.

In the Jewish home, the new arrival will find a synagogue, the walls filled with memorials of the large donors, plaques, and plates and tablets. It is not likely that the elderly people who come to worship will notice the walls--not these elderly who, in the past, have prayed in Minsk and Lemberg, in ships on the way to America, and in

storefront synagogues. It is explained by the authors that, while this home is in a modest setting, it is not that easy to be accepted into the home. There is a waiting list of two or three years for patients who require a great deal of care. For a patient in good health, the usual wait is a year. There is an exception, says the authors with tongue in cheek, when they receive a phone call at the home that they label "VIP." It is from a judge, board member, heavy contributor, or the heads of ladies' leagues. This type of call is a "social emergency," which always requires immediate admission.

It is not necessary to describe more of the book; the purpose of the book was to point out the shortcomings of "homes for the elderly." One must agree that "homes" do have their shortcomings--after all, they are undertaking a tremendous task; they are trying to do what the private family decided was impossible. The following is a quotation from the book showing how the residents get along with each other and the attitudes assumed by the residents.

There were no serious ailments to distract the residents, so they concentrated on each other. Such anger as they felt at the children or relatives who had found no home for them but this was hardly ever expressed directly to the children or kin, but redirected to other residents, or more precisely, toward other rejects. These ladies were quick to hate others who, like themselves, had not been loved enough to be kept. "You are no good," and "I am no good; that's why I am here," were the most frequent accusations they hurled at each other.¹⁰

Here we have been watching the contemporary scene in a Jewish home for the elderly; let us now go back into history and observe how the elderly Jewish were helped in Israel's time until the present.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

Help for the Aged

Historical background. In the society of ancient Israel, the aged were highly respected and given a central position in family life and tribal structure. The Jewish religion made charity an obligation. The Hebrew word zedakah means both "justice" and "charity." Mosaic law made it a rule to offer food and shelter to the needy and assessed the rich for the benefit of the poor. Organized charity thus became one of the principal duties of the synagogue. Incorporated in this concept was confidentiality and the absence of stigma for the recipients. The synagogue was the forerunner of modern philanthropy, at least among the Jews. "The aged were no problem to the ancient Jews because they obeyed the ancient commandment, "Honor thy Father and thy Mother." The aged as a group did not become a problem until modern science extended the life span."¹¹

The ideal in Israel was to treat the elderly well; however, no attempt was made to issue specific regulations or to create institutions to help the aged or care for them as such. If not living among the family, as was customary, destitute aged people were treated as part of the general social problem created by poverty and weakness and the precepts concerning alms giving applied to them. Thus, we see that while old age was originally invested with strength and majesty, people of the lower strata of society who had lost the support and care provided by the family underwent much suffering and humiliation in their old age.

¹¹Jacob R. Marcus, "Background for the History of American Jewry," in The American Jew (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), p. 9.

An interesting article has been written by Dr. Fred Rosner entitled Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud.¹² Here he suggests that the Israelites often lived to a ripe old age because of medical care that was offered to them. He stresses that in the thirteenth chapter of Leviticus, sanitary regulations of cleanliness and purity, such as quarantine for infectious diseases, are unique and do not appear in surrounding nations. He notes that long life may have been aided by the burning of contaminated materials in the household, as well as the practice of fumigating houses. It was also the practice of the Israelites to boil objects that could not stand fire in order to disinfect them.

As another prevention of sickness, the Bible insists that bodily wastes be covered in the ground with a paddle (Deut. 23:13-14). This was to prevent pollution and to stop the spread of intestinal infections. Apparently, homes for the elderly and hospitals for the elderly were unknown in biblical times; however, in Second Samuel a "house of distance" is mentioned (15:17). This house of distance was probably a sort of "isolation ward" to prevent the spread of illnesses. The elderly in the Bible were treated therapeutically as were other persons by washings, anointing with oils, wine, balms, compresses, and baths at spas (2 Kings 5:6-14).

In Europe, it is recorded that a hospital was started for poor old Jews in Cologne in the year 1145. It was called Hospital Pauperum; wandering Jews were helped there, many of them elderly. Many Jewish communities maintained hospitals throughout Europe, copied after the one

¹²Fred Rosner, Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud (New York: KTAV, 1977).

in Cologne.¹³ One was developed in London in the year 1678. In Lithuania, in the year 1667, a Jewish law was passed by the Lithuanian Council offering loans to the elderly at low interest rates; the elderly were also to be aided by gifts, partnerships in small businesses, and other acts of loving kindness. In the same vein, in 1558, the Jews were asked to comply with an age-old Jewish custom and call on all friends and neighbors and to visit especially the sick and elderly. This Avignon statute also made provision for the nursing of the sick and elderly. Those who shirked their duty had to pay a fine which was used to aid the sick and elderly. Jewish hospice-hospitals were built in Tatisbon in 1210, in Koblenz in 1351, and in Munich in 1381. In Castile, there was a Jewish casa de la merced in little Xerez de la Frontera in 1266.¹⁴

One of the goals of every German-Jewish community during the medieval period was the care of the sick and elderly. Local ordinances were enacted by the Jewish community of Kahal; the sick and elderly were to be cured not only by medication, but by spiritual, social, and religious methods--primarily by prayer. In addition to those methods of helping the sick and elderly, another therapy was used--that of folk-medicine, amulets, conjuring, exorcism, magic and the like. Since many Jews were poor, the latter therapy was used most, and not medicine.¹⁵ These communities were conscious of their duty because they believed that

¹³ Salo Baron, The Jewish Community (New York: New York University Press, 1971), II, 327.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 329.

¹⁵ Jacob R. Marcus, Communal Sick-Care in the German Ghetto (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1947), pp. 4-5.

it was prescribed in the ethical teachings of Judaism and was, consequently, a sacred obligation of every organized Jewish community. Each community tried to build a hospice for the poor and for stricken transients. The community council made sure that the hospice was supplied with physicians, surgeons, drugs, and bathhouses.

Impoverished sick persons, whether old or young, who were respected citizens of the local community were given a small subsidy which had to be renewed periodically. Jews who were not residents were given less favorable treatment than those who were citizens. A greater mass of people were old and sick transients who were given a night's lodging in a local hospice and dispatched to the next village by cart. One may wonder why so many Jews were transients during the Middle Ages and the answer is because of the break-up of the family due to the many persecutions and massacres. Large-scale migrations brought great suffering to the aged. In the year 1650, the Jewish community in Rome introduced care for the aged as one of its charitable activities.¹⁶ A home for the elderly was founded in Amsterdam by the Sephardic community in 1949.

In modern times (from the second half of the eighteenth century) the need for extensive treatment of the elderly became apparent. Old age was beginning to be viewed as a social problem separate from poverty. In many families the old idea of loyalty to the "covenant" and respect for the elderly was breaking down. An increasing number of Jewish foundations to care for the elderly were established.

The Mishenet Zekenim ("Support of the Aged") society, was

¹⁶ Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Care of the Aged," in Encyclopaedia Judaica (New York: Macmillan, 1972), II, 346.

established in Hamburg in 1796. An old-age home was founded in Berlin in 1829, and another in 1839. The Frankfort community founded a home in 1844 for men and women aged 60 and over. A Viennese family donated several houses for accommodating aged Jews of the community. By the twentieth century, most communities in Europe included a home for the aged among their welfare institutions. In 1938, there were in Germany alone 67 homes for the aged with 3,568 beds.¹⁷

The contemporary period in the United States. Let us now center our attention on the care of the Jewish aged in the United States. Jewish families at first refused to communicate with paid social workers, feeling that the family should handle its own elderly. However, the generation gap began to widen as time went on, and soon Jewish families were placing the elderly in homes as a last resort. About 20,000 persons wished to stay in their own homes and were served by family agencies in 1966. It was not long before the aged were called "senior citizens," and retirement towns and resorts were established for them. In all, seventy American Jewish homes for the aged, with about 12,500 beds, were formed by 1966.

We will now focus directly on the Los Angeles area, noting first that during the Depression Jewish residence in Los Angeles reached its maximum concentration. In 1970, 60,000 Jews attended ten synagogues, and there existed nine hotels, two theaters, lodge rooms, kosher restaurants, an old people's home as fine as an expensive hotel in the Boyle Heights section of Los Angeles alone.¹⁸ It was calculated in 1941, that in Boyle Heights, Central Wilshire and West Pico-Wilshire, and Hollywood,

¹⁷Ibid., p. 347.

¹⁸Max Vorspan and Lloyd Gartner, History of the Jews in Los Angeles (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 1970), p. 203.

94,700 Jews resided. One can imagine that many of these persons were elderly and in need of help.

Many people believe that there is no such thing as a poor Jew who needs material help. This is not true. A study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center of Chicago in 1962 reported that 15.3% of Jewish householders received incomes of less than \$3,000 a year. Approximately 65% of poor Jews were between the ages of sixty-five and above. In the year 1965, about 18% of America's Jews were sixty-five and over. It was estimated that 60% of the elderly live alone. Cities like New York, Miami, and Los Angeles exhibit serious pockets of poverty. In 1962, Los Angeles reported almost 9,000 Jews receiving some form of public assistance. "According to Bernard Warnard of the New York Association for the Services for the Aged, 13% or 780,000 of America's six million Jews, are older people. Approximately one-half of these elderly people live at or below the poverty line. The data here cited refers [sic] to 1978-79."¹⁹

Many elderly people feel discouragement, the loss of hope and faith, the feeling that one has been betrayed by society, the government, by social agencies, perhaps by one's own kind as well. The poor and elderly feel fortunate indeed when a large hospital is available in the community. Below is a list of the hospitals and homes for the aged in the Los Angeles area compiled by the Jewish Federation-Council of Greater Los Angeles.

(1) California Home for the Aged, 19260 Sherman Way, Reseda (91335)

¹⁹Thomas J. Cottle, Hidden Survivors (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 3.

(2) Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, 8720 Beverly Blvd., L.A. (90048)

(3) City of Hope, 208 W. 8th St., L.A. (90014)

(4) Gateways Hospital and Community Mental Health Center, 1891 Effie St., L.A. (90026)

(5) Los Angeles Jewish Home for the Aged, 18855 Victory Blvd., Reseda (91335)

Below is a list of commercial retirement homes for the aged which are privately owned and operated with a view to making a profit.

(1) Shalom Retirement Hotel, 330 N. Hayworth, L.A.

(2) Beverly Sinai Towers, 8435 Beverly Blvd., L.A.

(3) Westwood Horizons, 947 Tiverton Avenue, L.A.

(4) La Brea Gardens, 7253 Melrose Avenue, L.A.

(5) Margo's Manor, 5527 Laural Canyon Blvd., L.A.

These homes were taken from a Jewish newspaper and others exist. It becomes evident that if one searches, many homes in Los Angeles and the surrounding area for the aged may be found. They range from expensive to not so expensive, depending on the services offered.

The next section discusses the philosophy of a respected Jewish humanitarian and his beliefs regarding the way the elderly should be treated.

The Future: Not Mere Survival, but God's Abundant Life

Heschel's Formula for Making Old Age Worthwhile

An author has ended his book by writing, "When we talk about old age, each of us is talking about his or her own future. We must ask

ourselves if we are willing to settle for mere survival when so much is possible."²⁰ Heschel is one who is interested in more than the mere survival of the aged; he suggests methods what will help them transcend earth and reach into the the presence of God Himself. His ideas are uplifting and attainable with God's help.

A revision of attitudes and conceptions is necessary. Old Age is not a defeat, but a victory, not a punishment but a privilege. . . . Our task is to call for the adjustment of society to the old. . . .

The test of a people is how it behaves toward the old. It is easy to love children. Even tyrants and dictators make a point of being fond of children. But the affection and care for the old, the incurable, the helpless are the true gold mines of a culture.²¹

Heschel believes it is biblical insight to provide material help for the aged, not by individual family help alone, but by national help such as medical care. However, he sees this as only one of the needs of the elderly; another need is to rescue them from despondency and despair. We must help the elderly see a beauty in their age. We must help them regain an authenticity about themselves. They have forgotten to dream and we must aid them in dreaming again.

He reminds the elderly that for thousands of years prayer and ritual were able to give a glory and a wonder to human existence that contributed to human strength. The elderly are challenged to face the opportunities to change and grow.

The years of old age may enable us to attain the high values we failed to sense, the insights we have missed, the wisdom we ignored. The formative years, rich in possibilities to unlearn the follies of a lifetime, to see through inbred self-deceptions, to deepen understandings and compassion, to widen the horizon of honesty, to

²⁰Robert Butler, Why Survive? (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. xiii.

²¹Heschel, p. 72.

refine the sense of fairness. . . .

The elderly should no longer see in every fellow man a person who stands in his way, and competitiveness may cease to be his way of thinking. . . .²²

Education for Retirement

Heschel believes that hobbies, crafts, and pastimes in a home for the elderly constitute the incorrect emphasis. He would have activities played down. In their place, he prescribes meditation, education, and relaxation. "The goal is not to keep the old man busy, but to remind him that every moment is an opportunity for greatness. . . . The elimination of resentments, of residues of bitterness, of jealousies and wrangling is certainly a goal for which one must strive."²³ This outstanding rabbi would have us realize that preparation for old age begins in youth. One must prepare spiritually in youth for old age and how to grow continually in that direction. Education for retirement, he believes, is a life-long process. "People are anxious to save up financial means for old age; they should also be anxious to prepare a spiritual income for old age."²⁴

The Marvel Is Discovered in Celebration

The person who has a sense of the present does not live in fear of the future. Knowing the Lord causes one to sanctify time. All that it takes to sanctify time, according to Heschel, is God, a soul, and a

²²Ibid., p. 78.

²³Ibid., p. 79.

²⁴Ibid.

moment. We always have the three. The elderly are urged not to sit in loneliness, but to share their moments with others. "The way to overcome loneliness is not to be waiting to receive a donation of companionship but rather by offering and giving companionship and meaning to others."²⁵ Each of us needs to remember that it is as important to the dignity of the young to converse with the old as for the well-being of the old. We deprive ourselves by shunning the elderly. It is important that we find ways to overcome the fear of being old. We must stop the prejudice and discrimination that we hold against the elderly.

The effort to restore the dignity of old age will depend upon our ability to revive the equation of old age and wisdom. Wisdom is the substance upon which the inner security of the old will forever depend: but the attainment of wisdom is the work of a lifetime.

It takes three things to attain a sense of significant being:

God

Soul

And a Moment

Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy.²⁶

Summary

In summary, the grim descriptions of old age were summarized from Ecclesiastes. Next, a look at the Jewish elderly in America showed the divorce of children of the elderly added to their grim predicament. The unpleasant feeling of committing a father to an old folks' home was next experienced. The history of care for the elderly was briefly described from ancient Israel to the present. Finally, the chapter closes with an uplifting formula for helping the elderly from the wisdom of Abraham J. Heschel.

²⁵Ibid., p. 83.

²⁶Ibid., p. 84.

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SETTING FOR CARE FOR THE AGED

Statistics in the United States and
the State of CaliforniaVital Statistics on the Elderly, 1960-1978

Many elderly are in our midst and we need to be reminded of the fact so that we can do something to help them. According to a report by Robert Watkins, "America's elderly have doubled since 1960, and America is propelled toward a restructured health care system between now and the end of this century."¹ According to this recent article, the latest estimate is that we have in our nation twenty-four million persons sixty-five or older. Nearly two-thirds live with families, 31 percent live alone, and six percent are in institutions. The growth of this group is expected to reach thirty-two million by the end of this century.

These figures compare well with those in the Statistical Abstracts for 1979. The figures below show how many elderly (in millions) there were in the United States during the specified years.

1960 . . .	17
1965 . . .	18
1970 . . .	20
1975 . . .	22
1977 . . .	24
1978 . . .	24

¹Robert Watkins, "A Combined Health and Living System," Contemporary Administrator (November 1980), 8.

The same source states that the following number of elderly persons (in millions) was given government assistance.²

1960 . . .	2.3
1965 . . .	2.1
1970 . . .	2.1
1975 . . .	2.3
1977 . . .	2.1
1978 . . .	1.0

Money given to these elderly amounted to the following billions of dollars.

1960 . . .	1.6
1965 . . .	1.6
1970 . . .	1.9
1975 . . .	2.6
1978 . . .	2.4

In 1978, according to the Statistical Abstracts in the state of California a resident population of persons over 65 was 2,243 thousand persons. In 1970, a census counted 101,065 homes for the elderly.³

Let us now consider the kind of care offered in homes for the elderly and what the American public image of nursing homes is.

The Quality of Care for the Elderly and America's Image of Nursing Homes

Quality of care received by the elderly. An interesting article written by Jean Donaldson, director of Minnesota's Office of Health Facility Complaints, lists the twelve most common complaints registered in her office for the year 1978:

Negligent nursing care	296	15.8% of total complaints
Inadequate staff	239	12.7

² Statistical Abstract of the USA (Washington: 1979), p. xix.

³ Ibid., p. 30.

Quality of food	123	6.6% of total complaints
Medication, abuse	94	5.0
Poor housekeeping	92	4.9
Patient's rights	91	4.8
Offensive odors	69	3.7
Personnel performances	65	3.5
Patient abuse	58	3.1
Poor laundry	57	3.0
Physicians	42	2.2
Orders violated	41	2.2 ⁴
Incorrect room temperature	20	2.1

As this author has held services in a rest home for two years, these complaints seem rather standard. The director of the agency contacts the homes, urging them to look into the complaints, exploring the bases for the complaints, and making necessary changes. The following chart shows the number of homes that she has contacted about complaints and the areas in which they are trying to improve.⁵

Dietary services and sanitation	63
Staffing and services	61
Housekeeping	42
Care of residents	29
Care of equipment	28
Medication	26
Electrical systems	26
Physical plant	26
Records and reporting	19
Complying with the Clean Indoor Act	17

Most of these complaints may be rectified with a sympathetic ear on the part of a nurse, an attendant, or the administrator; however, at times there are complaints that need urgent attention. The writer of the article states that in the early 1970's, there was a "witch hunt" in the homes for the elderly and that since that time, giant steps have

⁴ Jean Donaldson, "Complaints Office Influence Quality of Health Care," Contemporary Administrator (April 1979), 11.

⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

been made in assuring a better quality of life for the aged in Minnesota nursing and boarding homes for the aged. A similar article was not found concerning the state of California; however, it is believed that the elderly are as well watched in California to see that their surroundings are more than adequate. In keeping with their welfare, an article in an 1980 regulatory report announced:

The Social Security Administration has announced its Title II Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance benefits and Title XVI SSI benefits annual cost of living increase. The increase in the benefit levels will be 14.3 percent effective with the June 1980 benefits, which are payable July 3, 1980.⁶

The American public's image of nursing homes. In 1975, Stuart E. Karu, director of the Market Research Bureau, ran a study for the American Health Care Association. The primary objects were to determine the attitude of the public toward nursing homes and what specific issues affect the present image of nursing homes. The sample included 2,066 men and women, eighteen years of age and older, living in private homes in the United States. Only one person per family was questioned. The conclusions are presented below.

(1) The opinion of the nursing home industry is not good. Only 24 percent of those questioned answered favorably. Fifty-nine percent gave negative responses. Only 29 percent went so far as to say that nursing homes were poor, and 50 percent of those questioned did not exhibit strong feelings on either side. The older one becomes, the better impression one has about nursing homes. When one actually sits down and figures out the costs involved in going to a nursing home, the more

⁶Washington Update, "A Regulatory Report," American Health Care Association Journal, VI (July 1980), 63.

positive one's impression becomes.

(2) When asked to describe a nursing home, most were not able to do so and the conclusion is that the public should be given a process of education on what nursing homes do and what they are like.

(3) It was found that 23 percent of those interviewed claimed to have a friend or relative in a nursing home. These numbers increased with age and income. These persons reported that they would not hesitate to place a relative in a home in the future.

(4) According to the study's figures, 62 percent of the population eighteen years of age and over have been in a nursing home at some time or other to visit. The testers feel that this figure is too high and conclude that many feel guilty because they have not visited a friend or relative in a home; they only state that they have visited when, in fact, they have not.⁷

(5) The most interesting responses came to the question, What was your impression when you visited a friend in a nursing home? Fifty percent of the answers were positive. The answers were that it was cheerful, active, and the patients seemed to be getting good care. Those administering the questions must ask, if so many people think the patients are getting good care and the homes are cheerful, then why is the overall picture of homes so bad? The testers may be rationalizing as they say they think that people describe homes more from what they have read about them than from what they have actually experienced.

(6) Another question was, Would you place a close relative in

⁷Stuart E. Karu, "The Image of the Nursing Homes," American Health Journal, I (July 1975), 28-29.

a nursing home if a physician recommended it? Fifty-five percent answered "yes." Twenty-nine percent said "no," and sixteen percent said they did not know what they would do.

(7) Thirteen percent of those questioned said that they would be willing to be placed in a home themselves. Fifty-five percent would go if it were absolutely necessary, and twenty-six percent said they would not go under any circumstances.

(8) Below are the answers as to why respondents would like to go to a nursing home some day. Thirty-six percent would not mind going to a nursing home for the reason "I will get good care." Twenty-seven percent said they didn't want to be a burden to anyone. Twenty-three percent said they they would go because they wouldn't be able to care for themselves. In summary, those who would not like to go to a home wish to stay with their own families in order to maintain their privacy.

(9) The question was asked, What services do nursing homes provide? The answers were quite accurate. Sixty-one percent answered that doctors were available, while eighty-one percent said that nurses were there. Twenty percent did not know that doctors or nurses were available. The conclusion here is that the public should be informed that doctors and nurses are an essential part of a nursing home staff.

(10) Another question was, If a regular hospital cost a patient \$100 a day, what would a nursing home cost? The answer, in 1975, was \$20 a day. Fourteen percent of those questioned either knew or guessed the correct answer. Thirty-five percent would not even venture a guess as to nursing home costs. Forty-two percent felt that nursing home owners were making huge profits. According to the American Health

Care Association, there is a great deal of misunderstanding here.⁸

(11) People were asked about their knowledge of the licensing of nursing homes. Twenty-nine percent of those interviewed did not realize that nursing homes have to be licensed in order to operate.

(12) The final question was, Do you feel there is a need for a nursing home in this community? Fifty-four percent of those interviewed felt a nursing home would be a good thing for their community. They felt that as time goes on, the need for nursing homes will become more apparent.

The final analysis seems to be that there are misconceptions about what a nursing home is and what it is trying to accomplish in the community. It is believed by the nursing home association that people feel more nursing homes are necessary. In general, people do not think positively about nursing homes, but it is not as bad as they expected it to be. There are many persons who hold a high regard for nursing homes and it is from this group that patients are coming. The public must be informed if feelings are to improve.⁹

The questionnaire administered to the 2,066 persons throughout the United States during 1975 did not contain the following question: Do you see a need for a chaplain in a nursing home or a home for the elderly? However, it is my contention that every home with "hurting" persons and families visiting those persons needs a chaplain. The nurses really are too busy and, anyway, it is not their place usually to talk of spiritual matters with the patient. A chaplain should be trained

⁸Ibid., pp. 29-30.

⁹Ibid., p. 30.

not only in theology, but in pastoral care as well. That person should have training in a hospital under such programs as clinical pastoral education. The remainder of this paper will discuss the care of the elderly in light of God's love and concern for them.

Are There Any Practical Differences in the Care of the
Elderly in a Jewish, Protestant, or Secular Home?
Do the Standards in the Bible and Ancient
Literature Actually Influence the
Treatment of the Elderly?

How Each of the Three Homes Was Chosen

This paper started out to be scientific in that persons interviewed were to be chosen on a non-personal basis. A letter was written to homes asking for permission to interview ten elderly persons. The administration of each home was asked to supply a list of thirty names of possible persons to be interviewed. It was explained that the interviewer would choose ten names from the list. The purpose of this method was so that the homes would not choose the best persons to be interviewed. Next, a list of the questions was sent to the administrators. These four questions will be explained thoroughly below.

The first Jewish home contacted said that too many persons were writing papers about their home now and that they were too busy. The second Jewish home thought that the outline was too complicated and that they did not have time to bother with the project. Finally, after weeks of effort, it was decided that the plan would be dropped and I would simply ask if I could interview ten of the elderly in each of three homes. This met with cautious approval.

Shalom Retirement Home is in Los Angeles in the Beverly-Fairfax area; the address is 330 North Hayworth. It is privately owned by an orthodox Jewish family, the Goldsteins. The owner was contacted and he invited me to his retirement home for an interview. Before my arrival, Rabbi Elisha Nattiv of Temple Shalom in West Covina, who is a long-standing friend, phoned in a character reference for me. On my arrival, the owner gave me permission to do the interviews but said that I must first talk with the activities director as to how this should be done. Miriam Ezraty next talked with me, asking many questions as to the purpose of the paper I was writing. She wanted to see the four questions that I would be asking and she wanted to know the purpose of each question. The reason that I had almost been turned down from doing the interviews was because the Jews for Jesus movement had been seeking access to the residents and she was afraid that I was one of that group. I was allowed to conduct the interviews by myself (she did not have time to help, other than line up possible candidates for me). On this basis, Shalom was chosen as the Jewish home in which I would interview ten elderly residents.

The second home contacted was the Disciples' Christian Home in Rosemead; it may be found at 8417 East Mission Drive in Rosemead. This home gave me permission immediately because I have a friend in the home. Hilda Rheinfrank is eighty years old and plays the piano in the services that I conduct at another home in San Gabriel. She made arrangements for me to interview ten persons at the Christian home. This was done by her asking several of her acquaintances in the home if her friend might interview them for a school project. She supplied me with a list

of names, room numbers, and telephone numbers. The Disciples' Christian Home was chosen on this basis.

The third home chosen was the Community Convalescent Hospital of San Gabriel. Its address is 537 West Live Oak Street in San Gabriel. This convalescent hospital serves the San Gabriel community area. It is owned by a collection of doctors and businessmen and is a corporation. The San Gabriel hospital is just across the street from this institution and patients go back and forth. The administrator of this home granted me permission to do interviews there because he knows me. I am the visitation minister from a local church, and two of our church members are residents in the home. One day, the administration asked me if I would conduct weekly church services in the home for them. We arranged to conduct services twice a month at the home. For two and a half years, I conducted these regular services and, thus, permission to perform the interviews was easily granted. Carol Barone, the activities director, was to supervise the project, but she gave me permission to do whatever I felt was necessary.

Description of the Three Homes

The physical plant. Shalom is situated in an area of the city that is becoming poor; businesses are moving away and store fronts are boarded over in places. Jews are moving away and I was told that the Mexican-American community is moving in. A questionnaire was submitted to the administration concerning a description of the facility and they replied that they do not give out that information. While I was at the facility, I observed what appeared to be three hotels--one large one

on the right side of the street and two smaller complexes across the street. The first, standing alone, was the most picturesque. It has six stories and houses the administrative office. It has a large dining room that feeds not only the residents of that hotel but also anyone from the Jewish community who cares to drop in. It is advertised as "kosher." The dining room is beautifully painted and lighted with what seemed like hundreds of beautiful chandeliers. The whole dining area gave one a feeling of peace and well-being. It was spacious and people sat at tables for four; the tables were covered with clean, beautiful table cloths.

The lobby to this first hotel is very large, and plush chairs and sofas are artfully spaced so that residents can chat in their spare time; large television sets are found here and there. Elevators service the six floors; each floor has single and double rooms. The rooms that I was in were clean and well-kept, filled with average and better furniture.

Across the street, one finds that the other two hotels do not meet the high standards of the first one. The rooms are smaller; the furnishings are not as good. The dining rooms are dingy and not as well lighted. The overall picture is quite a few steps down in quality from the newer, larger hotel across the street. In answer to my questions, I found out that there is no infirmary connected with the hotels, no hospital, no laundry on the site. They do not have pamphlets describing the facility. The three hotels seemed to rank luxurious, good, and fair (the third). All were adequate.

The California Christian Home is located in the residential area

of the city of Rosemead. It is in a middle-class area. Owned and operated by the Disciples of Christ Church, it is a home for retired ministers, missionaries, and church members. However, recently, it has been screening and accepting respectable residents of other Christian sects as well. The reason is that they are finding the costs and up-keep too much these days. Massey Hall is built like a California mission. Besides housing two floors of residents, it also houses the administrative offices. In the east wing is found the infirmary that contains thirteen beds. Massey Hall is the largest of the buildings and also contains the laundry room for the entire complex as well as the heating system, water system, and storage areas. A new, spacious kitchen was added to Massey Hall in 1967, at a cost of \$350,000. The nursing center is elsewhere and contains fifty-six beds.

Rodgers Hall was built in 1940. Its purpose was to house the staff, but it is now a residential hall. Each room is rather small and contains a shower and a heating unit. The eighteen residents have a spacious kitchen with a stove and refrigerator. There is one three-room apartment in Rodgers Hall. Across from this building is the chapel and the social hall. The chapel holds two hundred persons and is beautiful, similar to a medium-sized community church. It is a vital center for the home. The social hall is connected to the chapel and contains a beauty shop for women and a barber shop for men. Thursday is set aside for haircuts.

North of Massey Hall and Rodgers Hall is the nursing center which I was not able to see because the flu season was at its worst and the unit was off-limits for visitors. Still heading north is a four-

story apartment building. At the end of the block, running its length, is a series of cottages known as the Rose Garden apartments. Across the street is the home of the administrator.

Five miles to the west in San Gabriel is the Community Convalescent Hospital. The home is one large building, Spanish style, with a single floor and a basement. There are thirty-five rooms for patients and residents, each containing three beds. The administrative offices are just inside the entrance, as is the nursing station. On this main floor are the small dining room, television room, and an enclosed patio. In the basement are a kitchen, laundry room, small swimming pool for therapy, and the offices of the budget director and therapist who rents the space as a private business person. Down the hall is a conference room for inservice training.

Budgets. Shalom did not wish to give out any budget information since this is a family business. One imagines that it costs a great deal of money to run. They do not pay the doctor fees for the residents nor do they provide workman's compensation. They do not have a hospital or nurses as part of their program. Their laundry is sent out.

The Christian home gave me budget information. The amount set aside for salaries for 1981 is \$869,616; employees' benefits, \$184,149; professional fees, \$29,180; expenses to occupy, \$577,804; extras, \$196,188; other operating expenses (not broken down), \$1,000,000. Mr. Benette, the administrator, said that the total budget for 1981 is \$1,962,191.

At the Community Convalescent Hospital, the non-sectarian home, I was given a complete rundown of the 1981 budget. The food budget is \$517,584; laundry, dietary, and kitchen expenses, \$182,000; housekeeping,

\$63,000; operating expenses, \$40,000; laundry, \$13,000; social services, \$24,000; administration, \$92,000; ancillaries, \$175,000; rent, \$101,000; insurance, \$8,200; workman's compensation, \$53,000; miscellaneous, \$44,000. The total budget for 1981 is \$1,358,742.

Total budgets for 1981:	Shalom	?
	Christian	\$1,962,191
	non-sectarian	1,358,742

The staff. The owners of Shalom did not care to go into staff information with me. The family owns the three hotels and most of the administrative work is done by the family. The director of activities has a great deal of responsibility; she is a native of Israel. Much of the help is Mexican-American and they do not speak English. The waitresses were Jewish and often spoke to the residents in Hebrew.

The Christian home is owned and operated by the Disciples' church. It has an administrator, a budget director, and office clerical workers. The total staff at present is 105 for a total of 240 residents. There are three registered nurses on duty around the clock. There are two activity directors, a male and female. Lawyers and insurance persons are available to the residents as needed.

The non-sectarian home, San Gabriel Convalescent Hospital, is owned and operated by a corporation of doctors and businessmen. The staff/patient ratio is 2.8 hours per patient per day. It was explained that this is a ratio required by the state. At present, there are 90 patients and 29 staff persons, for a ratio of 3.2. According to my source, there is one head nurse who is a registered nurse, another registered nurse who is busy on the unit, three LVN's, and twelve aids.

It was explained that one aid does nothing but make sure enough drinking water is in each room. Another only gives showers and shaves, while a third only gives baths to the residents. Doctors are on call and are the patients' own private doctors. There is a staff medical director. The Mexican-Americans present, in all probability, may be illegal aliens and the problem of communication exists. It is now against the law to ask to see either a social security or an alien green card. Inexpensive labor is hired as needed to perform menial jobs. It is important to note that these Mexican-Americans are most kind and understanding with respect to the residents. They are pleasant and most helpful to them and I found them gracious and mannerly to me.

Shalom	privately family owned and operated; Jewish and Mexican workers
Christian	church owned and operated; church staff and Mexican workers; total staff, 105
non-sectarian	private corporation of doctors and businessmen; Mexican-American laborers; total staff of 29

The residents. The administration of Shalom would not give out any information about the residents. The Christian home has 240 residents at the present time. Most of them are connected with the Disciples' church in some way; most are ministers, missionaries, or church members. However, because of inflation and other financial pressures, the home is now accepting persons from other denominations if they meet the set standards. The residents range in age from sixty to ninety-three years. There are accommodations for married and single people. In order to qualify to enter the home, the prospective resident must be able to walk to the cafeteria. However, if in future years the person cannot

walk or care for himself, he is cared for in the infirmary. All residents are required to eat dinner in the cafeteria; seats are assigned and every resident is accounted for in this way. As mentioned previously, thirteen residents could be ill in the infirmary while another fifty-six persons could be ill in the nursing center. Those in the infirmary are long-term, while the nursing center patients are in for a short duration.

In the Community Convalescent Hospital, there are presently ninety patients. About three-quarters are bed-ridden, while the others are, for the most part, in wheel chairs. The residents range in age from sixty-five to a few who are in their nineties.

	<u>Total Residents</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Ratio Women to Men</u>
Shalom	?	average and above	7:3
Christian	240	professional educated	8:2
non-sectarian	90	average or below	3:1

Conducting the Interviews

How the histories of each residents were obtained. It must be emphasized that, while this paper started out to be scientific, it has not been possible to remain scientific. Each of the three homes did not want to give me information on any resident from its files. Rather, they expected that I could obtain that information from the resident to be interviewed; thus, this was done in the form of an informal warm-up chat before the questions were asked. In the Jewish home, Shalom, Mariam, the activities director, simply asked persons in the lobby if they cared to be interviewed by her friend Howard. If the person said yes, then a

chair was pulled up and we began to talk informally. Twice a person came up and said that Mariam had told them that I wanted to see them. A few interviews were arranged as the residents ate in the dining room. They told me a time that I could come to their rooms and interview them. Three women playing bridge asked me to wait until the game was over when they would gladly talk to me.

The same procedure was followed in the Christian and non-sectarian homes. First, the friendly, informal chat in order to obtain a life history as well as to establish communication. In the Christian home, a friend there had supplied me with a list of names of persons who volunteered to be interviewed. I went to each of their rooms and talked to them, first reminding them that I was Hilda's friend and that she had mentioned me to them. Each of the persons allowed me to interview them.

The non-sectarian home was easier to conduct the interviews since most of the ninety residents know me as their minister or have seen me in the unit for the last two and one-half years. I was given permission by the administration to interview the residents.

The reason for each of the four questions. Below is a list of the four questions asked each of the ten residents in each of the three homes:

- (1) Who are the persons who care for your needs?
- (2) Do you feel people like you in families like yours are respected these days?
- (3) What does your religion (Judaism or Christianity) do for you?
- (4) Do the practices in this facility help you in your worship of God?

Question (1) was asked to see if they have a support system and who they are. Most residents wanted the question clarified--did I

mean in the institution or did I mean from home? I wanted to know all the persons who cared for them both in the institution and at home. The purpose of the question was to see if they are treated personally by others, or if they are a forgotten number in a room.

Question (2) was asked to see how each resident felt about him- or herself. Do they have self respect, do they feel respected by others in the home, do they feel respected by the staff, do they feel respected out in the community if they are able to be out and about? Finally, I wanted to determine if they were respected by their relatives at home.

Question (3) is what I considered the main question for the purposes of this paper: What is your religion doing to help you in these days of old age, sickness, loneliness, etc.? It is the main idea of the paper. Does Jewish literature really help the elderly; that is, do Judaism, the sayings of the Talmud, and the Christian gospel really count in the lives of these elderly people?

Question (4) was asked to see if the residents felt that the home was helping them in their spiritual quest to know and be at peace with God in these last days of their lives. It was asked to see if they were being cared for spiritually. At home they had the church and visitors who might come to their home to visit and have devotions with them. But what about the "institution"? Was there a chaplain and did he actually help them spiritually? Did religious groups from the community come to hold services and to visit and was this helpful? These are the things that I was getting at in question (4). The next step would be if the home is not helping, what can be done to improve the spiritual lot of the elderly?

Findings from the Three Interviews

Question 1: Who Are the Persons Who Care for Your Needs?

1. Jewish home. Six out of the ten persons interviewed said that Miriam, the director of activities, looked after them. It was noticed that she called the doctor for them, went to their rooms, and wanted to know why they had not come to breakfast. One woman said that Miriam involved herself in putting on programs since she had once been an entertainer. Miriam seemed more than director of activities; she seemed like a social worker, nurse, house-mother all rolled into one.

Four persons stated that they needed no help--that they did everything for themselves. As an after-thought, an eighty-year-old man said that the police were his help in that he had been struck on the head and robbed in his apartment and the detective had talked him into coming to the home a year ago so he would not be alone. Two others, a man and a woman, said that their children looked after them. One consisted of a doctor and his family and the other a business family.

A ninety-year-old man was very happy in the interview as he was expecting his doctor to call on him at any moment. In contrast, an elderly lady came into his apartment. She seemed lonesome and confused. She looked at me and said, "I think I know you." I said, "Yes, I met you at lunch." I stood and touched her and said, "I certainly do know you." She said, very sadly, "I am glad somebody knows me."

2. Christian home. The entire ten persons agreed that they were able to take care of themselves; but, then on second thought, they each

said that the administration in the front office took good care of them. One woman appreciated living in a Christian atmosphere and being well cared for by the staff of the home. Another eighty-three-year-old woman who has been in the home for seventeen years was cared for by the nurses and the National Benefit Annuity man who visited her took good care of her. She said many persons at the home help her. Most of the persons mentioned that the cleaning women always asked about them and seemed to take a special interest in their welfare.

A married couple in a different building mentioned that they take care of each other. The husband stated that the main check on their well-being is that they are required to eat the noon meal in the dining room each day. If they are not in their assigned places, their room is checked to see that they are well. They may go out all night, but must sign out and leave a phone number where they can be reached. These couples are younger and in better health than many others. The man in this case had just returned from playing eighteen holes of golf. He is seventy years old.

Another woman mentioned that she feels cared for in that a panic button is on the wall by her bed. In the night, if she were ill or afraid, she would push the button and someone from the nurses' staff would come to her room. An old missionary from Africa who had been in the field as a medical missionary for forty years told me that for every two residents at the home, there is one staff member to care for them. "Those who care for me," she said, "are the administrator, the dining room and kitchen staff, and the activities director." And still another woman stated that everyone cares for everyone else; they even babysit

each other's house plants from time to time. One person complained that the rent keeps going up and that she ought to be well cared for because she is paying good money for it.

A seventy-seven-year-old woman said that she felt an invisible hand was caring for her and looking after her. A man thought he is well cared for because everything is provided to him: meals, pills, nursing care, and a panic button. This man seemed terribly lonesome. He asked me to listen to his life story; it took an hour and a half. I think he would like to have someone to talk to him, especially to listen to him.

3. Non-sectarian home. Only three residents felt that they were cared for by anyone. One ninety-year-old woman said that she feels close to Janet, the woman in the office who pays her bills for her. The office worker's daughters call to see her from time to time. One of the residents of the hospital is her friend and they talk together every day. She lived in an apartment before entering this home and four of her friends come to see her occasionally. They attended the Presbyterian Church together.

An eighty-seven-year-old lady with a pleasant Irish accent told me how the cleaning woman talks to her and is her real friend and smiles at her. One day, I told this lady from Ireland that I had recently been in that country and she begged and begged me to take her home to Ireland--home to Ireland to die!

A woman of eighty-five from London, England, is the only one of the ten interviewed who is not confined to a wheel chair. She said many people here help her, but she doesn't need much care. She feels that she is well cared for--in fact, the people spoil her rotten, she said.

Every time someone needs a letter written, this woman will gladly compose and write it in beautiful long-hand for them. She was a reporter for years for the Los Angeles Times. She was in charge of lost animals and humane societies. Another woman is a ninety-two-year-old Methodist. She thinks that I know all about her former minister and always talks to me about him. She feels that her friend, the one who cares for her, is the office woman in the front who looks after her accounts.

Seven out of the ten feel uncared for. A deaf woman is eighty-seven years old. Her husband, who was a good man, died fifteen years ago, and four years ago her only remaining brother died. All she would say was that she wanted to go home. As she and I are good friends, she hugs my arm tight and smiles at me, but we cannot understand each other without shouting and soon we have thirty people looking at us.

A man in a wheel chair was following me; I did not know him. I stopped and looked at him and he said that he wanted to be interviewed. This eighty-year-old man hailed from Scotland. He told me sadly that no one cares about him. We had a good time talking about Scotland as I had been there recently. Now, when he sees me, he comes up to me and his eyes light up. Another eighty-seven-year-old man simply said, "I don't know anyone here. Will you get my sweater out of the closet for me? I am cold." I got it. An eighty-one year-old woman told me that she can't remember who cares for her. A woman in her seventies, who once taught school, said she doesn't need anyone to care for her. "I can care for myself," she said. "I think people here would help me if I asked them to help me. I don't ask."

Summary of answers to Question (1)

Jewish home:	institutional staff	6
	myself	3
	children	1
Christian home:	institutional staff	8
	myself	2
	children	0
Non-sectarian:	institutional staff	4
	myself	5
	children	1

Question 2: Do You Feel People Like You
in Families Like Yours Are Respected
These Days?

1. Jewish home. Four out of the people believe that they are highly respected, especially in the circle of persons with whom they associate. One eighty-year-old man was the assistant to the rabbi in a Conservative congregation in Covina. His wife said that many people would ask his advice in all kinds of matters. His slogan for life is "Give, don't take." He feels that elderly people who are shown no respect have always been takers in life and not givers; therefore, they deserve little respect.

Four persons weren't so sure they were all that respected. They stated that they hoped they were respected. One man said that he respects others and believes that he is respected in return. He tries to help others as much as he can. He was in the Russian army band for thirty years and at the home he has played his violin for concerts to entertain the residents. This has made him well-known and appreciated at the ripe old age of ninety-three.

A former German diplomat who is Jewish and eighty-three feels that he is not known here at all. He feels that in the last four years

he has been here, the residents have lost their ability to think and reason. He feels alone and cannot communicate with anyone. "No, I am not respected anywhere now," he said. "No one speaks to me. No one is warm to me. I am in a foreign country."

A female resident stated that the people in the home respect her but her children do not. "Kids in general do not show respect to me," she said. Eight of the persons interviewed have children who take good care of them by coming often to see them. Three were coming in a few minutes; one was already there, happy that her mother was being interviewed.

2. Christian home. Six persons felt that they are highly respected. Four felt that they are certainly respected. One eighty-year-old woman thinks that she is respected because she gives of herself. She plays the piano in the infirmary, for chapel services, and in other places such as convalescent homes. A man gave as an example that he is respected the fact that his son calls him often and talks with him. During the interview, the son called from New York telling the father that he and his wife were coming to visit him and they set the date.

A ninety-three-year-old former minister reads a devotional before the noon meal each day in the dining room and offers a prayer. He is respected highly, he suggested. This same man, as a way of showing that he is respected by his relatives, said that his grandson called only two hours after his great-granddaughter was born to tell him about it. He sent the girl a paper of the family tree.

One woman thinks that the reason they respect each other so

highly in the home is because they are of a higher caliber than other people and so respect each other for it. Another elderly lady thinks that parents who have spent their younger life yelling at their children do not deserve respect. The children do not come to see them because they, as children, were ill-treated.

An eighty-eight-year-old former school teacher and administrator thinks that she must be respected because the school in which she served in Tustin was named after her when she retired. She cried when I told her that I would like to be respected like that.

One lady is afraid that she is remembering the respect that she once had and does not now enjoy. She seemed very lonely, frail, and quiet. She seemed to be living on memories.

The seventy-year-old man, just returned from golfing, stated that at the home he feels respected because they are all senior citizens in the same boat.

One woman in her late seventies was a medical doctor in China for forty years. She told me that she feels highly respected in this home where each individual counts. "The Word of God says that we are important, and I try to live that way," she said. Laughingly, she related her trip to China five years ago. At the airport, two children were assigned to her, one on each side. They were to help her up and down steps and to care for her in general. This lady, who has white hair, and her daughter went into a restaurant. From a line of persons waiting to be served, a man came down the line and took her by the arm and showed her to a seat. The Chinese really respect those with white hair, she told me.

Another of the women feels that, while some people complain about lack of respect for the elderly, the elderly certainly receive a lot more respect than they did a few years ago. No one at the home felt that they were not respected.

3. Non-sectarian home. Nine of the ten persons at the San Gabriel Community Hospital felt that they are respected. One person said that she didn't know if she is respected these days or not. One man said that he thinks that he is respected, but then he burst out crying for a couple of minutes after that and did not elaborate on the subject. Did he really think that he was not respected, or was he comparing his present situation with the days when he was highly respected in the work world?

One ninety-year-old lady stated that she feels respected to a certain extent but that this institution does not have the welfare of the patients in mind and they are concerned with making money. Another elderly person said that the staff had better respect her or else they would hear about it! My friend from England repeated herself by saying that she feels respected and she is also spoiled rotten. The ninety-two-year-old woman says that she is respected by everyone, even the office manager. It was difficult to get them to understand that I meant do they feel respected by their children and by the public in general, not just by the staff in the home? Most of their relatives have died and even their children are not living. They have not been out in stores or anywhere but in the hospital for a long time and the question seems to be relevant only in the hospital setting.

Summary of answers to Question (2)

Jewish home:	highly respected	4
	respected	3
	not sure	2
	not at all	1
Christian home:	highly respected	6
	respected	2
	not sure	2
Non-sectarian:	highly respected	2
	respected	6
	not sure	2

Question 3: What Does Your Religious Faith Do for You? How Does It Help You?

1. Jewish home. Seven persons enthusaistically stated that God was their helper and that they had faith in Him and they prayed to Him. In this group, a man said that Judaism means being good to people. He said that when he goes to bed, he rests easy knowing that he has helped others. "Praise be to God," he said, "until I am laid to peace." Another in this group said, "I live Judaism. I love my people. I suffer when they are hurt. Just wait and see. God will punish the German race."

Another woman said, "Judaism does wonderful things for me; my grandson is a rabbi." She went upstairs and brought me a letter that he wrote to her so that I could read it. When the grandson was seventeen, he toured Israel. One evening, he left his hotel alone and went for a walk. He became lost and wandered all night. He found a bench on which to rest. A rabbi came by and asked to help him. The rabbi had keys to many locked caves in the desert; he found a cave for her grandson with food and a bed in it. Her grandson was so impressed that he studied to become a rabbi. Judaism had saved her grandson from robbers and bent his heart toward being a rabbi. That is one thing that she knows Judaism

has done for her.

A man said that he is proud of his heritage and he knows it well. The ninety-three-year-old former Russian soldier said that he knows that "God is always with me. Even now I feel He is telling me what to do." Another person said that she couldn't go on without God's help. "I hope, I pray, and I help others. I was brought up in Judaism and I have kept to it."

One's impression from interviewing these ten Jewish persons would be that men are more impressed with Judaism than women are. Two women stated in a rather bored fashion that they could take religion or leave it. One stated: "I am not religious at all. There are certain services that I can do without. They bore me."

Two of the women interviewed were from Poland and they were refugees. Both these women said they were secular Jews only; they explained that they did not believe in God, nor did they care for the religious part of Judaism. One woman explained her reason in this way: She and her family were smuggled out of Poland into a safer place. She was instructed to go to the Temple and ask the rabbi for food and help as the family was starving. It was New Year's Day and the rabbi answered the door. He said to her, "Go away, child, until I have finished my dinner." She could see the food on his table and from that day on, she told me, she has had no use for rabbis or God.

Another lady was not as emotional but told about the same story. Her two brothers were killed in Poland. She was a smuggler for the family, earning money that way. She has no use for Judaism or God, she told me; this does not mean that these two women do not help fellow Jews,

because they do. They give money and are proud to be Jews, but in a more nationalistic way. One wonders if they were not so hurt and had not built up a hard protective shell, perhaps a good talk with plenty of love and understanding could bring them around to an appreciation of both Judaism and God.

2. Christian home. All ten persons in the Christian home explained that they have a strong faith in Christ that sustains and keeps them. One woman had been raised in a Christian home and had let her religious life slip as an adult. She came here for her retirement, and the chapel services and kindnesses of the residents caused her to rekindle her faith in Christ. She had been despondent over the death of her husband and the home had pulled her out of her unhappiness.

A man told me that religion has been a big thing to him all his life. He is not disappointed in Christ or the church. "Mother is responsible for my faith," he said. "Every night as a youngster she would pray at my bedside." Still another man who is ninety-three said that Christ and the church inspired him to become a minister; and, for years, he was the head of education for his denomination in Indiana.

One woman who could be short-tempered told me that Christ reminds her and helps her to treat others gently. The wife of a past administrator of this home who is now a resident herself explained that both she and her husband are happy in Christ. Her husband, at the time of the interview, was out calling for the home. She was thankful to God for the good health of them both.

Another woman stated that she could not live without her Lord to whom she feels very close. In her opinion the former ministers and

missionaries in the home kept her stimulated by their slides, talks, and discussions. "We residents of the home are close to one another," she stated.

A female missionary to the Belgian Congo for forty years said that Christ and the church mean everything to her. "If I miss a church service," she said, "I feel something is wrong." Another elderly woman who has a school named for her told me that she feels God's presence with her. This home is important to her and it is like her own family. "They are such pleasant associates."

The man who had just returned from golfing and was tired said only, "Well, yes, Christ is important to me." His wife, on the other hand, said much more. She mentioned that she and her husband read the Bible together every morning and that they serve communion the third month in the chapel here at the home. She stressed that women serving communion was something new, and equal numbers of men and women were allowed to serve. She feels that, as she gets older, the Lord means more to her. A female medical doctor from China said that Christ certainly does mean a lot to her and that she did not come here to die but to live. She told me that Christ is here, especially in the chapel services and in the services held in the nursing home.

3. Non-sectarian home. Six of the ten persons interviewed at the convalescent home believe that their faith helps them. The other four persons interviewed either feel that religion doesn't help or else they are not interested in religion at this time.

Mrs. W. has arthritis and, as she reads her Bible, she prays that

God will ease her pain. In the church service held twice a month, she reads a devotional; she does this very well and her readings are appreciated by the thirty persons who attend. Once she came to our church at my invitation and told the children's story. Seven of her friends from the home came with her, including the director of activities, who was really in charge of them all.

Mrs. O. from Ireland told me at the beginning that she was four or five years old and that her religion comforted her and was a strengthening influence on her. Mr. C., who comes to the services, expressed the thought that Christ was a help to him. Mrs. H., a Mormon woman, told me that her religion gave her hope. Mrs. F. quickly responded to the question by answering that there was no doubt of her faith in God. He helped her and always has. Mrs. M. asked me, "If I didn't have God, what would I have?" She said, "I trust and rest in God."

Among those who do not find religion helpful is the deaf woman who said that she was once a Baptist and is now a Catholic and everything is no good! Mr. Mc. stated, "I have no religion. I keep myself going." Still another woman said, "Religion is just so-so with me. I used to go to church; right now I am not in any trouble."

Summary of answers to Question (3)

Jewish home:	no life without Judaism	5
	personal faith in God	3
	tradition and culture	2
Christian home:	no life without Christ	8
	culture, behavior	
	change	2
Non-sectarian:	sustains, helps	6
	so-so, don't know	2
	not at all	2

Question 4: Do the Practices in This Facility
Help You in Your Worship of God?

1. Jewish home. Five persons strongly agreed that the practices at Shalom aided them in their worship of God. Some lauded the owner, Mr. Goldstein, while other praised Miriam Ezratz, the director of activities, for her part in organizing and conducting Friday night Shabat in the lobby of the spacious home.

Another person, on being asked the question "How does this home help you in worshipping God?" stated that she just had a good feeling about Shalom. Still another said, "Yes, definitely. This home helps me to worship God. We are many Jews together and we have a lot in common." Three people felt the home helped them worship God, but they had some reservations. One elderly lady is of the opinion that the home helps her worship God, but that her son helps her more. The ninety-three-year-old man said that the home is orthodox and keeps all the rules, such as keeping kosher; but he is conservative and finds the home too extreme for him. He said that he is embarrassed to walk down the street and see a Jew in a shawl. However, he likes the home's emphasis on the Bible and he believes if everyone would obey the Bible the world would be a different place.

A woman was ready to criticize the home and then changed her mind. Instead, she asked me simply to write down that the home is all right. Two men eating together both felt that the home is only interested in making money and not in offering a service to people. One of the two felt that the place was good for the uneducated Jew, but not for an educated person like himself. There is no one to talk to intelligently.

It is Jewish, yes; human, no! Everything here needs improving. He was in a bitter mood. No one mentioned that everything was very clean, very neat and that the home was filled with helpers, neatly dressed and clean. There were plenty of over-stuffed chairs in which to sit and other amenities.

2. Christian home. Nine out of the ten said that the home definitely helped them in their worship of God. One man, not a minister or professional person, was not so sure. He stated that the Mexican handyman had told his wife that he (the man being interviewed) was his close friend. He cried when he told me this. Apparently, he has a need for a friend and apparently has not found any in the home. An outsider is his only friend. He is the man who talked to me for an hour and a half before he was ready to answer my questions; he is most lonely.

The other nine are, for the most part, either ministers, missionaries, or public school teachers. They almost all voiced a oneness in their feelings for each other. Such words as "peers" and "fellow Christians" kept occurring in their conversations. They voiced the idea that they understand each other because they all have about the same level of education, culture, and love for God. Thus, this feeling of friendship makes it easy for them to worship together and they feel that the home gears everything that happens to them so that they can worship better; the home was organized with God and the elderly in mind.

Everyone mentioned the beautiful chapel that I was shown. It looks like a small church in a middle-class community; it has an organ, lovely wooden pews, a carpeted floor, a beautiful pulpit, and seats for

a choir. The home has a choir of elderly people who call themselves "The Keen Age Choir." Each Sunday morning, they travel to a different Disciples of Christ church to sing. A bus takes them to the church. Another bus from the Alhambra Disciples of Christ Church comes each Sunday morning and takes those to church to want to go to Alhambra. This helps them to worship God in a freer, fresher way in that they are not confined to the home if they desire to worship somewhere else.

All but one respondent mentioned that each Wednesday night is a prayer meeting service. They sing, express themselves, and pray. Three persons reminded me that they have communion each Sunday, and that this is helpful in their worship. Dr. K., the ninety-three-year-old former preacher, told me that the home has a good reputation and that he has had his eye on it for forty years as a possible place in which to retire. He said that it is a Christian home indeed!

The woman who has been here seventeen years and has a school named for her pointed out to me that a service is held periodically to remember the deceased spouses or other family members held dear to the residents. She finds this most meaningful and it draws her to God. This, of course, is a policy of the home. All spoke enthusiastically of the devotionals at meal time, the honor of conducting them being passed from one person to another. It is also the policy of the home to cooperate with local public schools in the area. The school comes to the home and puts on programs for them and the residents show slides of missionary work from Africa, China, etc. All of the women were enthusiastically talking about sixty mother and daughter look-alikes who had come. The residents were to vote on which mother and daughter looked

the most alike. Prices were awarded and the residents were very much caught up in it all. These programs occur all the time and are sponsored by the home to entertain the residents. This is not, strictly speaking, helping them worship God, but is another way of looking at life and certainly does contribute to their ability to worship.

Another undertaking of the home in the interest of the residents is a huge rummage sale each year. The purpose is to raise money to support the residents at the home whose money has run out. They have lived longer than their contract had expected them to live. In this sale, businesses from all over the Valley donate goods--not just junk, but new, stylish clothing. The women can buy at a very low price a complete new wardrobe for themselves. One lady who was a helper informed me that the sale earned \$8,000 profit last year in addition to reclothing everyone at the home who wanted new clothes. Five out of the ten interviewed spoke in glowing terms of the home. However, it must be pointed out that they were in excellent health, while the other five were obviously not as healthy.

One man explained that the buildings were graded according to one's pocketbook and one's health. If a rather young and healthy couple comes in, they may want a garden apartment. Here they can work in their own yard if they wish; it is like a cottage. All these factors--environment, good food, and "tender-loving care"--are a great help to worship. A good relationship with the community is also an asset to a feeling of tranquility. Seven out of the ten seemed to be at peace with God, at peace with themselves, and at peace with the world. The remaining three cried because they appeared to be less educated than the majority; they

were shunned or else kept away from others on their own; they seemed lonesome and friendless and ill. Each person's self-esteem is enhanced, I was told by one woman, because when you feel that you have a cold or anything, you just call the cafeteria and they will bring your meal to your room.

3. Non-sectarian home. Four persons feel that the convalescent hospital helps them worship God. These four persons did not speak with much conviction, however. Six persons did not believe that the convalescent hospital helped them in their worship of God at all.

The woman who presents a devotional at each of the services feels that her participation draws her closer to God. One man felt that the two church services, presented because the administration of the home wanted them, has helped his worship of God. The Mormon lady believes that the services have aided her in her worship of God. Still another woman said that the two services have helped her worship God better.

Those who feel that the institution does not help them worship God have the following reasons. First, the deaf woman kept shaking her head saying that she can't understand me. However, I know that she enjoys the services because she relaxes with her friends. The Irish woman answered yes that the home helps her worship God; however, she is not too responsible a person. First, she is extremely active and continually leaves and re-enters the church service. The home twice caught her far from the hospital, walking aimlessly away from the facility and, as a result, medicated her to keep her in the home. The man who seems most bitter stated that he is grateful that the facility does not force

religion on him. I am thankful he stated that the hospital does not interfere with him in that regard. One of the women said that the practice in the home might help her worship God; she doesn't really know.

The woman from London felt the hospital does not help her worship God because there are so many residents who scream and carry on. She stressed the fact that many of the elderly here are not totally coherent.

Summary of answers to Question (4)

Jewish home:	yes, by supplying worship services	3
	yes, for a variety of reasons	4
	so-so, helps mildly	2
	not at all	1
Christian home:	yes, by supplying worship services	7
	yes, for a variety of reasons	2
	so-so, yes and no	1
Non-sectarian:	yes, by supplying worship services	5
	do not know	1
	not at all	4

Conclusions That One Might Draw from the Study of These Three Homes

Practical Differences in the Care Provided by Each of the Homes

The most dramatic and obvious point in this study is that the American government has taken most of the responsibility for the elderly-- a task once assumed by the tribes and families of Israel. In America, citizens are taxed to that all elderly will be cared for adequately. The elderly are able, if they wish, to use this money to enter a home for the elderly. Those who have amassed large amounts of savings will naturally be able to choose a more luxurious home than those who have nothing.

Since the state is involved in supporting the elderly in homes, the home is inspected periodically to see that it meets certain standards; to this extent, all homes are alike. However, in this study, all the homes were not alike because the Jewish home did not seem to fall under the state's regulations because it was financed mainly by Jewish agencies. The other two homes were different again in that one was strictly a home for the elderly and the other a convalescent hospital for elderly persons. Both the latter two institutions were under strict governmental controls. In all three homes, residents were receiving good, but different, care. All physical needs were being cared for in each home.

The emphasis of the Jewish and Protestant homes is mainly religious. Each has its own culture in terms of music, scripture, and faith. These two are communities of believers in God. However, the non-sectarian home takes its elderly mainly from a hospital nearby that can no longer meet the needs of those persons. Here, the elderly are suffering from a variety of ailments from broken bones to cancer. Most of these persons have only what the government pays and the hospital takes in return for its care.

The religious homes are cared for by like-minded religious persons in the community who offer free time to make the lives of the elderly more interesting. However, since the non-sectarian elderly are rather ill and helpless, working with them is not as interesting because often they do not relate unless one works very hard to establish a relationship. This is one of the main differences between the three homes. The religious homes act together as a community, while the hospital for the elderly is, for the most part, individual. The two religious homes

emphasize social learning situations and having fun together, while the non-sectarian home is busy trying to keep the individual elderly person alive and cure broken bodies. In order to effectuate healing, the non-sectarian home finds it necessary to provide crafts and recreation in order to get fingers and limbs working again.

In a previous chapter, it was explained that Abraham Heschel advised that the elderly should not perform activities of these kinds, but should be worshipping God and preparing to meet Him. However, he was speaking more about the elderly who were not as ill as the ones in the convalescent hospital. The two religious homes appear to contain happier and more socially adjusted residents, both in relation to themselves and to other residents. Although the elderly at the convalescent hospital are ill and need plenty of activity to rehabilitate their bodies, religion should not be left out of their lives if they wish to have it. Many complained that they wanted religious services and the administration gladly asked churches to come and supply worshipping experiences. In his lectures, Heschel stressed that the elderly need the spiritual in their lives; and the elderly at the non-sectarian home responded most dramatically when the spiritual dimension was added once again to their lives. However, there are ninety persons at the home and only thirty are able to attend services; this leaves sixty elderly who do not have any spiritual uplift. They are too ill to take notice of much besides their illnesses.

Another difference needs to be noted between the Jewish and Christian homes: the Jewish outlook is one of realism as contrasted with the Protestant outlook of idealism. The Jewish residents and the

philosophy of the home deal with the here-and-now. The Protestant elderly have a hope in the future--a hope in a future life with Christ. The Jewish residents tried to make the best of the present, while the Protestants, for the most part, were more willing to put up with the "now" because of the blessing of the future life. Many in the convalescent hospital did not care about either the present or the future; they were just waiting for their medicine in order to ease their pain. They were helplessly waiting and waiting.

The last point in this section is that a religious person who was grounded in God and trusting in Him (be he Jew or Protestant) usually had acquired that faith at an early age. Many persons mentioned that they learned their faith at their mothers' knees. This seems to show that the traditions of the Jews and the teachings of the Bible do make a great difference in the lives of the elderly. When an elderly person feels good about himself and God and treats others in a friendly, Godly way, then life is better for all concerned.

All three homes work hard to treat the elderly well and to treat their physical needs with great care. The two religious homes give added attention to the spiritual dimension which brings cheer and joy; they emphasize communication which, in turn, seems to form a community. However, the convalescent hospital elderly are just too sick to have nearly as much joy as the other two homes.

How Has Los Angeles Culture Hampered Jews
and Christians from Caring for Their
Elderly as in Ancient Times?

Several sources suggested that the family breakdown has caused

problems in caring for the elderly at home. In America, we believe in youth; we tend to keep the children and let the old folks go. In the ancient days, as noted, the grandparents were the ones who taught the culture to the little children; they were valuable and needed. Now, children learn culture at school, in scouts, or in other youth organizations.

In the Los Angeles area, one's job often necessitates a transfer out of state. Old people like to stay in one place--usually the one where they have spent a great deal of time. They do not want to be constantly on the move. So when their children suggest they move with them to some other town or state, they say no. One's job and constant moves keep a family from living the way ancient biblical people did. It was easier to be in a rural setting with many relatives and tribal members around. Here, life was slow and easy with very few pressures other than raising food, finding water, and making clothing.

Even much later, Jews lived in communities of like believers. Now, Jewish children attend public schools as do most Christian children. Cultures of many countries are learned and the American culture is naturally upheld as the best. This tends to erode pure Jewish idealism and Christian idealism, too, for that matter. As children continue in school, the religion in which they were raised sometimes seems not to be so wonderful after all. They learn to adapt to a scientific age, to materialism, and even to agnosticism and atheism. Some Jews never mention again that they are Jews. Some Christians give up the hope that was once in them. As a result, they no longer think that they are to care for the aged as expected in the Bible--the faith of their youth.

All the above reasons make the synagogue and church rather poorly attended institutions at this particular time. God seems distant and hardly relevant at all. In ancient times, religion was important in the lives of Jews and Christians; in our present culture, there are vast numbers of ideologies pulling in different directions. At this time, the elderly do not seem to count very much in the family; the slack has been taken up by the government in the form of social security, medical, and other health benefits. These monies are able to sustain them in retirement homes.

Finally, one must conclude that the study of these three homes, comparing and contrasting them on the same level, is not possible. First, we are not discussing three homes that have very much in common except for the elderly residents. The Jewish home sees itself as a retirement home for Jews. It is extremely different from the Christian home in that the Protestant home is actually supervised by the Disciples of Christ Church which is a huge organization with pockets of support all over California. Its purpose is religious and charitable. The Jewish home studied is a business operated by a private, wealthy Jewish family for profit; it is true, however, that the Jewish welfare agencies also take an active interest in the home. In order for the two religious homes to be considered on the same level, it would have been necessary to have studied a Jewish home for the elderly like the one in Reseda (however, it did not wish to become involved in this project).

The non-sectarian home is even more difficult to compare in that the administration does not assume a religious responsibility for the

residents at all. They are, for the most part, only interested in the medical and physical parts of the elderly. Each of the three homes is doing well in terms of what they set out to do; however, each has a different reason for existing and for attempting to serve the elderly.

Summary

Recent statistics prove that the elderly are dramatically increasing in number. America's elderly have doubled since 1960. In biblical times, most of these elderly would have been cared for by their children. This study shows that this is no longer true and the government has taken over the task. How does the government do this? It taxes each citizen so that all the elderly will be adequately cared for. The elderly can receive help in their own home or they may elect to go to a home for the elderly where more help will be provided. This study shows that homes of all types are on the increase and they are being improved by regulations and public opinion. The elderly themselves are banding together and demanding better care.

Three homes were studied and ten of the elderly from each home were interviewed with a set of four questions in order to see how things were in a Jewish, Protestant Christian, and non-sectarian home. The primary question was, "Does your religion help you and comfort you in your new setting?" This subject gave us an opportunity to discuss Judaism and Christianity in depth if the elderly cared to do so. Another question was "Does this institution help you in your worship of God?" The subject of this study is responsibility for the elderly in light of Jewish literature; thus, the reason for this question was to see if the homes

were caring for the elderly because of the Old Testament imperatives or simply for a lucrative motive. The budget of each home was examined as well as the staff, the residents, and the physical setting of the home. A chart is found at the end of each question summarizing results.

It was found that the three homes were not as alike as first thought. The Jewish home consists of three hotels and offers a service, but it is in business to make a profit. It has strong ties to Judaism; but while it is a home for many religious Jews, it is also a home for many nationalistic Jews who do not care for religion. There is a strong sense of community at Shalom, but there is also a strong sense of community at the Protestant Christian home in Rosemead. The Jews seemed loyal to the state of Israel while the Protestants are loyal to the church headed by Jesus Christ. The non-sectarian elderly are in that home because they are too sick to go home from the hospital. This home is very different from the two others because only very little or no sense of community exists. The Jewish and Christian homes are constantly working at community, while each of the elderly at the non-sectarian convalescent hospital is simply working at staying alive, individually. At times, much faith and trust in God are exhibited by persons in the convalescent hospital.

It is clear that the elderly in Shalom are more "earth-oriented" than those in the Protestant or non-sectarian homes; they want to make things more comfortable for themselves now. They seem to be more realistic with an outlook that seems to say "now or never." On the other hand, the Christians gave the impression that things are not too bad and soon they will be reigning with Christ forever--all pain will be gone

and "He" will wipe away all tears. I called this difference "realism versus idealism." In general, it is to be noted that this seems to make the elderly Jews more willing to complain even about their own people, while devoted Christians brush things aside and say circumstances are all right.

All three homes are feeling the pinch of inflation and the fact that the elderly are living longer is also a problem if they are to care for the resident until death, having accepted a fixed amount of money to cover the cost of care. All three homes, therefore, hire the least expensive help they can find to perform manual labor; all hire illegal Mexican aliens. One might think that this is a hardship on the patients; to the contrary, many residents told me that the "help" was most kind and thoughtful. They take time to smile, to hand the resident this or that, and to aid them patiently.

One must remember that most of these conclusions are based on my own observations and someone else may come up with other ideas about some things. One observation is that the Jewish women interviewed did not care at all for the Jewish religion. They are certainly loyal, nationalistic Jews, but they care nothing at all about services and the Hebrew language. The Jewish men interviewed enjoyed the services, the language, and all the trappings. By comparison, the Christian women are the opposite; they quoted scripture, told of favorite hymns, and listed reasons why they trusted and loved God so much. In fact, some of the Christian women residents were as enthusiastic in their praise of religion as the female Jewish residents were in disavowing any enjoyment in religion. Again, in general, the Jewish residents felt that God loves

them because they have obeyed Him and have studied and gotten a good education. They have made the most of their lives and helped as many others Jews as possible. They have given vast amounts of money to Jewish charities, especially Israel. The Christian residents do the opposite; they disclaim any good they have done as persons and instead put their faith and trust in the person of Jesus Christ. The Jews interviewed (at least a few of them) feel that they have earned a place in God's graces by good works; on the other hand, the Christians say exactly the opposite: "We do not trust in our good works; we trust only in Jesus Christ." This gives the Christian a strong hope of an afterlife. The Jews interviewed do not hope so much as they just exist. They have made it this far, says the Jewish resident, and whatever happens, happens.

Finally, some reasons are presented as to why Jews and Christians alike are not able to care for their parents in the home as they did in ancient, and not so ancient, times. The Jews lived mostly in rural areas, in tribes of more or less like-minded people. Now, times have changed; Jews and Christians alike are scattered all over the country. The breadwinner of a family is often transferred as part of his job and the elderly do not want to be uprooted; often a home for the elderly is the only answer. In a home, the elderly are with people of their own age group and are able to communicate better. Divorce is increasing and the elderly cannot be supported very well by a single parent who may be struggling with young children. Sometimes the elderly are not tolerated in homes because of in-law problems. These are some of the reasons why the elderly are now sent to homes rather than living comfortably with their children.

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